

Hello Chair, members of the committee, my name is Dr. Joseph Nelson and I am a provider at Whole Woman's Health in Bloomington. I am here to speak in support of House File 366.

As a physician, patients routinely share information with me that they have never told anyone else before – that's both incredibly rewarding, and also a heavy responsibility. In part, that level of trust exists because my patients know that I will not judge them for anything they tell me, and that what we discuss will be kept private. The longer I have practiced, the more essential it feels to create a safe, supportive environment where my patient can be truly open with me – only then will I be able to care for them appropriately.

When patients in a difficult situation like an unwanted pregnancy open up to me, it's my responsibility to make sure I do all I can to help them and support them. In my practice in Texas, this became extremely difficult as law after law reduced my ability to care for patients. Telling a patient in crisis that I was not able to help them, and having my hands tied so thoroughly that I couldn't even tell them where they could go to access care, was the worst experience of my professional life. It felt like a betrayal. Things continued to worsen until finally, the Supreme court made the decision to allow states like Texas to ban abortion outright. It became clear that to continue to help my community, I needed to leave my community – so my partner and I left our home and moved to Minnesota (in the middle of Winter, I might add), - a place I felt confident that my patients would be protected, and I would finally be safe to care for them free from the control of extremists in the Texas government.

When I arrived here, I learned that there are some providers even here who do not feel safe caring for patients coming from certain parts of the country like Texas. Imagine traveling across the country for a procedure only to be turned away – I ask, exactly what are these patients supposed to do? This bill provides the legal support needed for all providers in Minnesota to feel protected, and to be capable of creating an environment where the trust that is so vital to our work. I want to say thank you to the authors and supporters of this bill – it is incredibly touching to know that there are people in our government who are working to make sure my patients, my staff, and myself are safe.

Thank you Chair and members for hearing my testimony today. I urge you all to pass House File 366